

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEDAN 0544

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ID
SUBJ: REPORTED BOMBINGS IN MEDAN.

1. MEDAN'S "CHRISTMAS" BOMBINGS BEGAN AT 9:00 P.M. ON CHRISTMAS EVE. THE FIRST EXPLOSION ROCKED THE CATHOLIC BUDI MURNI SCHOOL ON MERAPI STREET NEAR THE TOWN'S CENTRAL MARKET AREA. THERE WERE NO INJURIES AS THE BUILDING WAS EMPTY EXCEPT FOR A LONE NIGHTGUARD. FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, A BLAST OCCURRED ON THE 3RD FLOOR OF A METHODIST SCHOOL HALL BEHIND A METHODIST CHURCH OPPOSITE BUDI MURNI. APPARENTLY, A CHRISTMAS PROGRAM HAD JUST BROKEN UP THERE AND SEVERAL INJURIES (NONE FATAL) WERE REPORTED.

2. AT 11:30 P.M. THAT SAME NIGHT THE ALWAYS-CROWDED APOLLO RESTAURANT (A CHINESE-FREQUENTED ESTABLISHMENT) WAS HIT AND ONE PERSON WAS INJURED.

3. THE FOURTH EXPLOSION OCCURRED AT APPROXIMATELY 8:30 P.M. ON THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 26TH AT THE RIANG THEATER, A BUSY DOWNTOWN MOVIE HOUSE. NO CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN REPORTED FROM THAT INCIDENT.

4. POLICE HAVE DETAINED "SEVERAL PERSONS" AND ARE PURSUING THE THEORY THAT THE BLASTS WERE RELATED. HOWEVER, THEY HAVE AS YET REPORTED NO CONCRETE RESULTS FROM THEIR INVESTIGATIONS. OFFICIALS
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ANNOUNCED THE BLASTS WERE CAUSED BY HAND GRENADES, THOUGH ONE RUMOR SAYS THAT REMNANTS OF A TIMING DEVICE WERE FOUND IN THE METHODIST CHURCH.

5. MOTIVATION BEHIND THE BOMBINGS IS STILL UNCLEAR; HOWEVER, IT CAN BE NOTED THAT THE NIGHTCLUB AND CHURCHES INVOLVED HAVE PREDOMINANTLY

CHINESE CONSTITUENCIES. AS IS USUAL IN THESE FLUID CIRCUMSTANCES, THE LOCAL CHINESE COMMUNITY IS PRESENTLY KEEPING A LOWER PROFILE.

6. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE TERMED THE SERIES OF SUMATRAN BOMBING INCIDENTS WHICH BEGAN SEVERAL WEEKS AGO AS PURELY POLITICAL ACTS, ATTEMPTS BY THE GOVERNMENT TO DISCREDIT PPPI TO PDI AND VICE VERSA; AND, AN EFFORT TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THE NEED FOR SECURITY AND ORDER UNDER THE PRESENT REGIME. THE FACT THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN INDONESIAN AND CHINESE BUSINESSMEN HAVE BEEN MUCH-IMPROVED RECENTLY TENDS TO CONFIRM THIS VERSION.

7. THE ONLY CONCLUSION WHICH CAN DEFINITELY BE DRAWN AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, IS THAT LOCAL AUTHORITIES DO NOT APPEAR OVERLY SECURITY CONSCIOUS. THEY GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT MATTERS ARE WELL UNDER CONTROL AND THAT THE BOMBINGS GIVE NO PARTICULAR CAUSE FOR CONCERN.

8. CONSULATE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION AND UPDATE AS NEW INFORMATION DEVELOPS.
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